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WHA FOR A/S SHANNON, DAS DUDDY, AND DMCCARTHY
WHA/BSC FOR BARNES, FRIEDMAN, AND BLAKENEY
NEA/IR FOR HWOOSTER
S/CT FOR VIRGINIA PALMER AND ARNOLD SIERRA
NSC FOR JUAN ZARATE AND JOSE CARDENAS
FBI FOR CTD IRAN-HIZBALLAH UNIT AND OIO AMERICAS UNIT

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KJUS](#) [AR](#) [FBI](#)
SUBJECT: CLASH AT INTERPOL LEADS TO HEIGHTENED TENSIONS
BETWEEN ARGENTINA AND IRAN

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Classified By: Ambassador E. Anthony Wayne, Reasons:
1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY AND COMMENT. On January 22, an Argentine delegation, led by MFA Ambassador Guillermo Gonzalez and including AMIA special prosecutors, met at Interpol headquarters in Lyon with Secretary General Noble and other Interpol officials to argue their case for issuing Red Notices for the suspects of the July 18, 1994 AMIA bombing. On January 30th, Ambassador met with Vice Foreign Minister (VFM) Garcia Moritan and DCM spoke with Ambassador Gonzalez to obtain their read-out of the meeting. Both confirmed that the Special Prosecutors had made a very strong presentation of the new evidence and had made significant progress in convincing senior Interpol officials of the seriousness of the GOA investigation. In the face of Argentina's strong presentation of evidence in Lyon, the Iranian delegation threatened to issue arrest warrants for the AMIA prosecutors. The GOA responded swiftly to the Iranian gesture, which it perceived as an act of "intimidation", with VFM Garcia Moritan convoking Iranian Charg d' Affairs Mohsen Baharvand to register the GOA's formal complaint. Following the January 22 meeting, Interpol Secretary General Ron Noble deferred the decision on whether to issue the Red Notices to Interpol's Executive Committee, next scheduled to meet in March.

¶2. (C) Garcia Moritan told Ambassador that the GOA would greatly appreciate, and likely need, the USG's quiet diplomatic efforts prior to the Executive Committee meeting. USG has strongly supported the GOA AMIA investigation and its recent efforts to obtain Red Notices from Interpol. Failure of this effort at Interpol in March would be seen as a victory for Iran. Embassy urges that USG does all we can to support positive Interpol Executive Committee action and seeks guidance on next steps. END SUMMARY AND COMMENT.

A Clash at Interpol Headquarters

13. (C) On January 22, a GOA delegation, led by MFA Ambassador Gonzalez and including AMIA prosecutors Alberto Nisman and Marcelo Burgos, met with Interpol Secretary General Ron Noble and other senior Interpol officials in Lyon, France, to defend the Argentine Investigating Judge's request for the issuance of Red Notices authorizing the arrest of Iranian ex-President Ali Bahrame Rafjansani and eight other officials (including one Hizballah official), who remain the chief suspects in the July 1994 bombing of the AMIA building in Buenos Aires. The Lyon meeting was also attended by a senior GOI delegation led by Khalil Helali Mohammadi, Colonel of Police and Head of the Criminal Investigation Department of Interpol Tehran, as well as other senior GOI and MFA officials.

14. (C) VFM Garcia Moritan told Ambassador on January 30 that the meetings had gone well, with a very strong GOA presentation of the evidence against the Iranian and Hizballah suspects. MFA Ambassador Guillermo Gonzalez gave a very similar assessment to DCM in a meeting on January 30. Gonzalez observed that prosecutor Nisman did a "superb" job in his 90-minute presentation before the Interpol Director of Legal Affairs, Dr. Martha. Nisman's presentation was extremely well structured, with specific details of the evidence being presented in the case against each of the suspects. Gonzalez explained that the meeting with Martha followed a brief bilateral meeting among Ron Noble, other Interpol officials, and the Argentine delegation, which began badly when Interpol officials asked if Nisman had come to Lyon with anything more than the "garbage" that former Judge Galeano had brought in 2005. In a January 30 brief discussion with Ambassador, DCM and Legatt, AMIA Special Prosecutor Alberto Nisman also said the GOA presentation in Lyon had made significant progress in convincing senior Interpol officials of the seriousness and strength of the new evidence in the AMIA case, but he stated clearly that the critical stage was now to ensure that the Interpol recommendation to the Executive Committee was to support the GOA requests for Red Notices.

15. (C) According to Ambassador Gonzalez, the GOI response to the GOA presentation was to question the evidence and the credibility of the witnesses. The GOI reps talked of their willingness to cooperate, but then very aggressively denounced the entire case, saying that the GOA was doing nothing more than presenting the same bad evidence that Galeano had presented earlier. They decried that the Argentine accusations were false and politically motivated, and should thus carry no legal weight.

16. (C) As part of their efforts to derail the GOA's presentation of its new findings and block the request for issuance of Red Notices, the Iranian delegation then threatened to issue arrest warrants for Argentine prosecutors Nisman and Martinez Burgos if they insisted on the detention of the former Iranian president and other officials. Ambassador Gonzalez provided details of how the senior Iranian police official had said that the GOI will demand that Interpol "arrest Nisman to present to the justice system in Iran." Gonzalez protested the GOI threat on the spot. This first threat was followed by a statement by the GOI Legal Advisor, who mentioned that the GOI "Religious prosecutor" is considering presenting a case against Nisman personally for his defaming remarks about Iran and Iranian officials. He said that the GOI would prosecute whomever says things like Nisman is saying against the Iranian state. A third GOI threat related to their stated intention to sue GOA officials for their judicial actions as the GOI reportedly did in the wake of the unsuccessful efforts in 1995 to extradite the former Iranian Ambassador to Argentina at the time of the 1994 bombing to Argentina from the UK.

An Act of "Intimidation"

17. (C) The Iranians' actions in Lyon prompted a swift response by the Argentine Government. On January 25, VFM

Garcia Moritan convoked Iranian Charg Mohsen Baharvand and lodged a formal protest. Garcia Moritan told Ambassador January 30, that he had expressed his disgust over what he considered Iranian "intimidation". Garcia Moritan said he requested that Baharvand share these sentiments with Tehran. Press accounts indicate that Foreign Minister Taiana himself decided to respond in this manner, in close consultations with President Kirchner. As indicated in Argentine news daily La Nacion, the prompt registration of the complaint and level of the Argentine official delivering it demonstrate the great importance this issue carries in Argentina. (Note: Last November, the Iranian Attorney General threatened the arrest of Argentine prosecutors under the assertion that they had violated the Iranian Penal Code by propagandizing against the Islamic Republic of Iran. End Note.)

Next Steps

18. (C) Ambassador Gonzalez said that Interpol SECGEN Noble spoke of March 20-22 as the most likely dates for the next Interpol Executive Committee meeting, but then in a final exchange with Gonzalez after the January 22 meeting said that the more likely dates would be March 13-15. Gonzalez said that the Interpol Director for Legal Affairs would now assess the arguments presented on January 22 and make recommendations on each of the GOA requests for Red Notices. These recommendations would be conveyed to members of the Interpol Executive Committee, which will analyze the arguments of Argentina and Iran, and likely will decide in March whether to advise issuing the Red Notices for the eight former Iranian officials and a member of Hizballah.

Comment

19. (C) Comment: Iran's continued aggressive and ham-handed attempts to intimidate Argentina play into our hands and should reinforce our resolve to support GOA efforts with Interpol, though in a quiet way. We remain concerned with SECGEN Noble's apparent predisposition to side with the GOI, but the prosecutor's strong presentation at the January meeting in Lyon appears to have made significant progress in making it clear that the current investigation is very different than the earlier Galeano one and that the evidence is itself very strong. This and continued expressions of support from the USG and the U.S. Congress (Chairman Lantos's letter to Noble) are undercutting Noble's arguments that the Argentines have not made their case. Post looks to Washington for further guidance on next steps, including quiet USG support for GOA efforts with the Interpol Executive Committee, as suggested by VFM Garcia Moritan. However, Post urges that we do all we can to support positive consideration of the GOA requests by the Interpol Executive Committee.

WAYNE